

Letter from Alexander Graham Bell to Gertrude McCurdy Hubbard, undated, with transcript

Probably late in 1877 Dear Mrs. Hubbard,

Although May has left space for me I am afraid I shall have to leave the greater portion blank.

Our experiments with the artificial cable are very valuable, and although the results obtained are not very striking so far as loud effects are concerned — they are most encouraging in this that we have succeeded in passing the sounds through the cable at all — in the face of Sir William Thompson's prophecy telegraphed to us yesterday that “if the connections are correct no sound will be heard”.

Of course Sir William's assistants are upon their mettle to be sure that the connections were all right. At Prof. James Thompson's suggestion we today determined to measure the “capacity” of the cable, and to compare it with that noted by Sir W. himself — so as to be perfectly sure — that the cable was in perfect condition.

Our first experiments today were thoroughly satisfactory — but we determined to test it in every possible way — and tried another and more complicated method of testing. — The result was totally different. However we discovered that we had made a mistake in the method of testing & had to do it all over again several times. Finally we obtained a determination that showed there was a defect either in the arrangement of the cable — or in the instrument employed to test it.

2

The latter seemed to be the more probable — and Mr. Gray (Sir William's assistant) is to test the tester this evening.

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We test the Telephone again through the cable tomorrow — for the purpose of determining 1stly whether pitch is transmitted 2dly whether the pitch is changed during the process of transmission & 3dly whether Articulation is rendered indistinct.

Tomorrow afternoon we visit the Deaf & Dumb Institution and the Institution for the Blind. Sunday we leave for Plymouth — and will? stay there for a few days. From there to Bath — one day. Hope to see the College where I used to teach — and to see Isaac Ritman. Thence to London.

Prof. Thompson & his family have been so kind to us. — Mrs. & Miss Thompson have fallen in love with Mabel — and Prof. Thompson has become an enthousiastic convert to Visible Speech — as a new type for the English language — to take the place of the antiquated Roman letters !! With fond love to all.

Alec.